

UNSTABLE AS WATER.

The Value of Having a High Purpose to Which to Tie.

"Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel," were the mournful words spoken by Jacob concerning his first-born son. They throw a lurid light on the character of Reuben, revealing the instability which ruined his life, and debarred him from the eminence to which his birth entitled him. The creature of impulse, he was at the mercy of the mood of the moment. More weak than wicked, he was wholly governed by feeling, and so he lacked the steadiness of principle. "Unstable as water"—the simile is very suggestive. Water has no cohesive shape of its own. It takes the form of the vessel into which you pour it, and changes quickly from one form to another. That is the evil of instability; it robs a man of power to stand on his own feet, and work out his own activity in the teeth of opposing forces.

The unstable life is like a rudderless ship, drifting on the ocean at the mercy of wind and tide. Life must be linked to some great purpose to give it stability. Purposeless lives are sure to be useless lives. Ralph Waldo Emerson says somewhere that the only great soul is the surrendered soul, the soul surrendered to a high ideal, which becomes the guiding-star of all activity. Search out the successful men in literature, science, art and business, and whatever differences of character and talent you discover in them, you will find that they are one in their consecration to some purpose. Look around you for the men who have failed, and you will find in them a common instability which pulled them down into dismal depths of failure. Unstable as water, they could not excel.

One important thing a young man should do is to hook his life with the chains of duty and perseverance to the highest purpose of which he is capable. Many make good resolutions, but alas! not so many carry them out. It is in lack of perseverance that the evil of instability reveals itself. Through heedlessness, through the joyous carelessness of youth, through aversion to serious endeavor, young men are apt to postpone effort to fulfill the dreams which come to them bathed in a light of golden glory, until they wake up some sad morning to find that the best years have been squandered away. Delay is dangerous. The act of indecision leads to the habit of indecision, and the habit paves the way for the character of indecision, which is the grave of noble purposes. If you have an ideal follow it at once and earnestly. If you have a purpose, let that purpose be the dominant note in your activity, and so you shall beat out life's true music instead of the wail of regret over buried hopes and misspent opportunities. One of Lincoln's messages to Gen. Grant in the Wilderness campaign of the civil war ran thus: "Hold on with a bull-dog grip, and chew and choke as much as possible." The language might be improved, but the sentiment of that message was admirable. Young men would do well to take it to heart if they wish success. They must hold on with a bull-dog grip to a noble purpose, and they must choke the instability which tempts them to turn aside from, or take their ease in, following out the activity demanded by the purpose they have made their own.

Instability is the secret of much of the weakness of Christian living in our day. Many who began the race well and were making progress suddenly relax their energies and turn aside. In

the matchless story of Pliable, John Runyan has depicted the experience of many a soul easily impressed by the beauty of the Christian life and the joys of Heaven, and as easily discouraged by the dangers and difficulties of the journey heavenward. Our Lord in one brief yet pregnant sentence shows us the fatal lack of such would-be Christians. They have no root in themselves.

Saintliness is not to be won sleeping. Success in the spiritual life comes along the line of concentrated energy. "This one thing I do," cried Paul, and his cry must be echoed by every soul that would see the beautiful vision and be clothed with the holiness of God.—R. W. D. Sunderland, in *Young Men's Era*.

Literary Notes.

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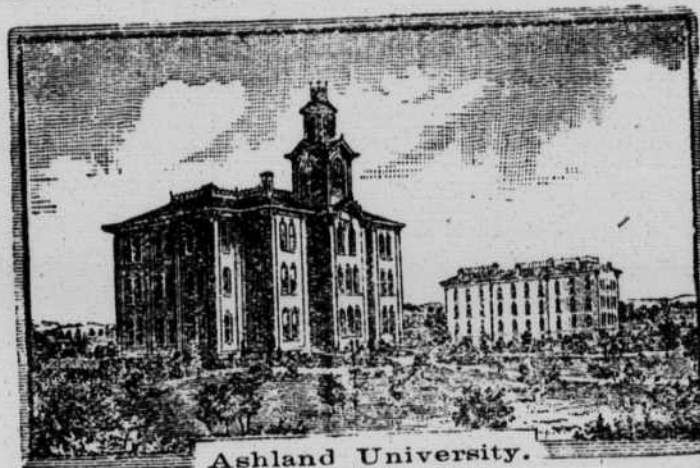
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